



Communicable Disease Branch Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Weekly Key Points

August 18, 2020

The North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) Communicable Disease Branch will be releasing COVID-19 weekly key points that includes information discussed on the weekly Tuesday Local Health Department call. Recordings of the call will not be made available; please use the information below as a summary of the topics presented on the call. As guidance changes, please use the most recent information provided. For questions, contact the NC DPH Communicable Disease Branch 24/7 Epidemiologist on Call at **919-733-3419**.

Important updates

- **Updated:** [Return-to-Work Guidance for Health Care Professionals](#)
- **Updated:** [Guidance for When to Quarantine](#)
- **Updated:** Find My Testing Place (file attached)

Infection Prevention

CDC has recently made several updates to their COVID-19 related guidance. Please see updated guidance below:

- [Return-to-Work Guidance for Health Care Professionals](#): HCP with [severe to critical illness](#) or who are severely immunocompromised, the recommended duration for work exclusion was changed to at least 10 days and up to 20 days after symptom onset.
- [Guidance for When to Quarantine](#): Persons who have previously tested positive for COVID-19, and have already undergone the initial 10-day isolation period do not need to quarantine or get tested again for up to three (3) months as long as they do not develop symptoms again. People who develop symptoms again within three (3) months of their first diagnosis with COVID-19 may need to be retested if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.

Outbreak and Cluster Reporting

Currently, outbreaks and clusters are reported to the State when LHDs complete a one-page worksheet and submit it to OutbreakWorksheet@dhhs.nc.gov. We are planning to transition away from using the outbreak worksheet to using an electronic survey for reporting of outbreaks and clusters. The survey will be accessible via an online link. Health departments will click the link, fill out the initial outbreak information in the survey, and click submit. The State will then create the outbreak or cluster event in NC COVID and send the Event ID back to the health department via email. This is only a change to the initial reporting process. Outbreak data must still be completed in NC COVID.

We anticipate sending the submission link in the next few weeks; the link will also be posted to the CD manual. The paper outbreak worksheets and the email account will be available until that time, but please plan on transitioning to using the online survey once it goes live.



School and University Clusters: Many schools and universities have resumed in-person classes and we expect to see an increase in COVID-19 clusters in these settings. Please make sure to quickly report clusters in these settings – as a reminder, clusters are defined as 5 or more cases within 14 days, with plausible epidemiologic linkage between cases. If you have questions or need consultation on clusters, please reach out to the epi on-call.

Risk History Package in NC COVID: There are currently questions in the risk history question package of the NC COVID events that ask if the patient attends or works in childcare, school, or higher education settings. Please be sure to complete this information as a part of your case investigations. We are working to streamline these questions and are also planning to add dropdown selections so that the specific school or childcare facility can be identified for each student or worker. We hope to use data from NC COVID cases to analyze how school reopening affects the epidemic in our state, so please do your best to note if your cases attend or work in childcare facilities or schools.

Environmental Health Updates

Environmental Health Specialists should be conducting inspections, visits, and other field activities using precautions to avoid close contact and potential exposure to COVID-19. Environmental Health Specialists should monitor active outbreaks in regulated facilities and do inspections in those facilities once the outbreak has ended. If an Environmental Health Specialist becomes exposed as a close contact to a positive case while conducting field work, they are required to self-quarantine at home for 14 days from last known exposure.

In response to the question posed in the chat: Fire Inspectors are conducting required inspections of schools, and no waiver has been given for those that would prohibit inspections from being completed, per the OSFM.

COVID-19 Vaccine Updates

There are several vaccines currently in development for COVID-19:

- Operation Warp Speed – Their broad strategy is to accelerate development, manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 countermeasures. The goal is to have 300 million doses by January of 2021. Over 125 vaccines are currently in development; over 25 in clinical trials are currently running. Two COVID-19 vaccines approved in other countries (Russia and China), however none are currently approved for use in the US. Six manufacturers already have federal contracts for vaccine purchase when the vaccines are approved.
- Planning Assumptions (full text in 8/4 HHS/CDC letter sent on 8/16 by Brian Combs)
 - Limited COVID-19 vaccine doses will be available in fall 2020.
 - Initial populations to be vaccinated will likely be those in the critical workforce
 - Initial doses of vaccine may be authorized under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)
 - Some vaccine candidates are multi-dose series; some require ultra-low cold chain
 - Target groups will likely change over time
 - Routine immunization programs will continue.
- Vaccine Allocation: COVID-19 vaccines will be allocated proportional to each state's population size, will be centrally maintained, and directly distributed by CDC's distributor to COVID-19 vaccination providers.



- **Vaccine Distribution:** COVID-19 vaccine will be procured and distributed by the federal government at no cost to enrolled pandemic vaccination providers and their patients. Vaccine is expected to arrive with needed ancillary supplies (needles, syringes, alcohol swabs, surgical masks, face shields). Reporting and accountability will be at the dose level. Providers will be expected to report doses administered to receive additional doses for replenishment.
- **Recommendations for locals:** In preparation for the release of COVID-19 vaccinations, local health departments should review H1N1 and smallpox plans, gather a vaccination team that will serve as vaccine subject matter experts, and assess the status of plans and staffing for vaccine campaigns.

Find My Testing Place

Please continue to review the updated 'Find My Testing Place LHD' Excel file weekly to ensure information is up to date and accurate. Please send the updated files or any related questions to SVC_Covid-19TestingSites@dhhs.nc.gov